

Empowering the Citizen Patient

Actionable Tips, Information & Resources to Support
Your Health & Health Care

Article #8

Healthy People, Healthy Communities
Be Prepared with Basic First Aid for Home and Play



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Accidents and injuries are an inevitable part of life, often occurring when we least expect them. Whether it's a slip of a knife in the kitchen, a fall from a bicycle, or a bee sting, being prepared to manage such incidents and knowing when to seek professional help are crucial skills. Dr. Mindy Smith, in this seventh installment of the "Empowering the Citizen Patient" series, provides a guide to basic first aid.

When I was 10 years old, I hit a rock while riding my bicycle and flew over the handlebars, skinning my knee. My mom bandaged it up, but by nightfall it was quite swollen. Mom took me to our doctor who drained it and I was soon back on my bike!

Being prepared to manage injuries and knowing when to get help are important skills to have!

Get a First Aid Kit

Having a well-stocked first aid kit at home can make a big difference during an emergency.

Leila Dale from Nelson shares, "Our first aid kit is in a cupboard for easy-access, the whole family knows where to find it, and I make sure it has everything we need if an accident happens. With three active kids under 10, sometimes it feels like we go through a box of bandages a week! I also keep a mini-kit in my car."



A good first aid kit should include:

- Elastic bandages (tensor) in various sizes for sprains
- Triangular bandage for a sling or tourniquet
- Bandages of all sizes
- Gauze pads for cleaning and non-adhesive pads (Telfa) for covering wounds
- Paper tape or self-adherent wound wrap
- Moleskin for blisters
- Scissors, safety pins, and tweezers
- Antiseptic agent, exam gloves, and a small flashlight
- Medications: aspirin, antihistamines (e.g., Benadryl), steroid cream (e.g., 1% hydrocortisone), burn cream (e.g., aloe vera), antibiotic cream (e.g., Polysporin), pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen), decongestant nose spray, antacids, and antidiarrheals (e.g., Imodium). For additional information, visit [WebMD's First Aid Kit Treatment](#). Another helpful website with

downloadable handouts to self-treat many conditions is available at <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/aftercareinformation>.

When to Seek Help

It is important to seek help when you feel overwhelmed by the situation or if the injured person shows severe or worsening symptoms. For instance, get help immediately if the person is unconscious, having trouble breathing, speaking, or seems confused. Additionally, if there are signs of infection such as increased or uncontrolled pain, swelling, red streaks, pus draining from the wound, or fever, professional medical help is required. If it's been more than 10 years since your last tetanus shot, you might need one for a wound, burn, or puncture.

Treating Common Injuries

Bites & Bee Stings



Insect bites, spider bites, and bites from animals or even humans are common. If the bite area is bleeding, apply pressure until the bleeding stops. Clean the wound with soap and water, apply antibiotic cream or petroleum jelly, and cover it with a clean, non-stick bandage. For itchy insect bites, a steroid cream can help.

For bee stings, remove the stinger if visible, apply an ice pack (10 minutes on, 10 minutes off for an hour), and use a mild steroid cream. Get medical help if bitten by a cat or human, or if the bite is on the hand, as these bites often require oral antibiotics. Large wounds needing stitches, bites that continue to bleed, bat bites, and poisonous snake bites need professional medical attention.

Burns

Burns can be caused by heat sources such as the sun or fire and treated based on severity. Surface burns are just red (first degree), partial-thickness

burns form blisters (second degree), and full-thickness burns (third degree) result in no pain and appear white/gray to black and dry.

For minor burns, apply cool water for 5 minutes or use a cold pack for pain or itching. Aloe vera can also help. For blisters, cut away any dead skin, use an antibiotic or nanocrystalline silver cream and cover with a clean, non-stick bandage. Wash the area daily with soap and water. Get medical help for burns covering more than 10% of the body, burns on the face, hands, feet, genitals, or major joints, and any full-thickness burn. Watch for signs of infection as well.



Cuts and Scrapes

These are everyday occurrences that require immediate attention. Apply pressure with a sterile bandage or clean cloth until bleeding stops. Clean the wound with soap and water, apply antibiotic cream or petroleum jelly, and cover with a clean, non-stick bandage. Wash the area daily and manage pain as needed. Get medical help if wounds are large as they may require stitches or if a wound continues to bleed or shows signs of infection.

Strains and Sprains

These are everyday occurrences that require immediate attention. Apply pressure with a sterile bandage or clean cloth until bleeding stops. Clean the wound with soap and water, apply antibiotic cream or petroleum jelly, and cover with a clean, non-stick bandage. Wash the area daily and manage pain as needed. Get medical help if wounds are large as they may require stitches or if a wound continues to bleed or shows signs of infection.



Accidents happen, but being prepared with a well-stocked first aid kit and knowing basic first aid can make a significant difference in managing injuries

effectively. Remember, it's always better to seek help when in doubt, especially for severe symptoms or signs of infection. I'd encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with basic first aid procedures and to stay informed by visiting reliable sources like WebMD. [Selkirk College](#) or your Regional District Recreational programming also have a wide-variety of First Aid courses to get certified!



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